

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 05773 101415Z
ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT BY POUCH
USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 5773

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, SY, US, XF
SUBJECT: ABOUT FACE ON U.S. IN SYRIA MEDIA

SUMMARY: PRESS CHASTISED PRESIDENT CARTER SEPT 9 FOR
REMARKS TO ALLIANCE OF NORTH AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS ONLY TO
SHIFT GEARS AND ALL BUT PRAISE HIM SEPT 10 FOR HIS SEPT 9
COMMENTS TO REPORTERS ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS. PRESS
TREATED PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS AS STRONG ATTACK ON ISRAEL.
WE BELIEVE SYRIANS WELCOMED MOST RECENT USG STATEMENTS AS
WELL AS FAHMY'S CLAIM EGYPT HAS NO DIFFERENCES WITH SYRIA
SINCE THEY HELP JUSTIFY MODERATE LINE TOWARD
NEGOTIATIONS ADAPTED
AT ARAB LEAGUE MEETING. END SUMMARY

1. MUCH OF SYRIAN MEDIA COMMENT SEPT 9 DEALT WITH PRESI-
DENT CARTER'S INTERVIEW WITH THE ALLIANCE OF NORTH AMERICAN
NEWSPAPERS INTERPRETING HIS COMMENTS AS A "RETREAT" FROM
PREVIOUSLY STATED U.S. POSITIONS TO A MORE PRO-ISRAELI
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 05773 101415Z

STANCE. PRESIDENT'S REMARKS WERE INTEGRATED INTO REPORTS
OF SHARON'S AND WIETZMAN'S REMARKS ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT
POLICIES GIVING APPEARANCE THAT U.S. SUPPORTED ISRAELI
SETTLEMENT POLICIES. THAWRA DERIDED HODDING CARTER'S
CONCERN WITH UNSC 242 AND PRESENTATION OF DRAFT PEACE
PLANS. COLUMN CLAIMED U.S. WAS TRYING TO MAKE THE ARABS
FEEL IT IS IMPORTANT TO PRESENT DRAFT PEACE PLANS

IN EMULATION OF ISRAEL. IT WARNED AGAINST PREOCCUPATION WITH RESPONSIVENESS OF PARTIES IN PRESENTING SUCH PLANS ARGUING THAT TO DO SO WOULD INDICATE THE U.S. IS BENT ON ENCOURAGING "ZIONIST EXPANSION AND FALSE ISRAELI PEACE PLANS."

2. IN STRIKING CONTRAST TO PRESS TREATMENT OF USG OVER PAST WEEKS, PRESS SEPT 10 REPORTED PRESIDENT'S SEP 9 INFORMAL PRESS CONFERENCE REMARKS AS SEVERE ATTACK ON ISRAELI POLICY. PRESS SAID PRESIDENT REAFFIRMED USG POSITION THAT SETTLEMENTS ARE ILLEGAL AND THAT THEY ADD MORE OBSTACLES ON THE ROAD TO PEACE. PAPERS REPORTED THAT PRESIDENT SAID LATEST ISRAELI ACTIONS ARE "INTENTIONAL DEFIANCE OF U.S. POLICY" (COMMENT: JUDGING FROM WIRELESS FILE REPORT OF PRESIDENT'S REMARKS, PRESS PUT WORDS OF REPORTER IN PRESIDENT'S MOUTH BASED ON PRESIDENT'S ASSENT TO REPORTER'S ANALYSIS. THEN TO DRIVE POINT HOME, PRESS JUXTAPOSED "PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT" RE DEFIANCE TO HODDING CARTER'S STATEMENT THAT THE U.S. HAD RECEIVED AN ASSURANCE FROM ISRAEL IT SHOULD NOT ESTABLISH NEW ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK.) THE PRESS ALSO CARRIED HAARETZ WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT REPORT THAT SOURCES CLOSE TO STATE DEPARTMENT SAID THE PEACE PROPOSALS TO BE SUBMITTED BY DAYAN WILL NOT BE SUPPORTED BY U.S. UNLESS ISRAEL PLEDGES TO WITHDRAW FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES WITH MINOR BORDER RECTIFICATIONS.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 DAMASC 05773 101415Z

3. TODAY'S FAVORABLE PRESS PLAY CONTRASTS WITH RECENT SYRIAN EFFORTS TO INTERPRET USG STATEMENTS NEGATIVELY. SYRIANS MAY NOW BE SEEKING JUSTIFICATION IN PUBLIC EYE FOR MORE MODERATE LINE ADOPTED AT ARAB LEAGUE MEETING. A NUMBER OF SYRIANS WE HAD TALKED TO FELT SYRIA HAD SUFFERED A DEFEAT IN CAIRO. PRESIDENT'S REMARKS TO PRESS AND OTHER SIGNALS SUCH AS FAHMY'S CLAIM THAT THERE WERE NO DIFFERENCES WITH SYRIA AT ARAB LEAGUE MEETING MUST HAVE COME AS TIMELY AND WELCOME JUSTIFICATION FOR SYRIAN ACQUIESCENCE IN UNITED ARAB STAND.
MURPHY

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